Really as a Free-standing TCU in English Conversation*

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In recent discourse studies, there has been a great amount of interaction-based research on discourse particles as a way of understanding meanings/functions in conversation. This research attempts to characterize *really*, which is used as a free-standing turn-constructional unit (TCU), by investigating its use in a range of interactional contexts from a discourse-pragmatic, interactional perspective. *Really* has been treated as an adverb or an exclamatory expression in traditional grammar, and a discourse marker in recent discourse studies. This research shows that the free-standing particle *really* can be better understood when considered in its interactional contexts, and that the exact meanings/functions should be considered in terms of interaction. It first investigates the distribution of grammatical properties of *really* through distribution/frequency analysis, examining grammatical properties of *really*. Examination shows that the major function of *really* is to modify grammatical elements that follow it, such as adjectives, verbs, and adverbs, at the sentence level. This study also shows that the free-standing *really* functions as a newsmark, and that it is used to signal that the information provided by the prior speaker is new and unassimilated into the knowledge system of the recipient. In such a context, the typical sequence that the free-standing *really* constitutes runs as follows: (i) news announcement, (ii) *(oh) really?*, (iii) reconfirmation, and (iv) assessment, justification, or additional information. This exploration of properties of *really* shows the importance of the sequential organization of talk in characterizing discourse markers or reactive tokens.

Key words: discourse markers, *really*, emphasizer, repair, unassimilated information, sequence organization

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, there has been a great amount of research on the relationship between meaning and interaction through an investigation of naturally occurring conversational data. Research on discourse and grammar has dealt with topics such as information flow, discourse structure, referent-tracking and anaphora, (in)definiteness and identifiability, cognitive constraints, and so on. In more recent years, there has been a great amount of research on the relationship between conversation, social interaction, and grammar in discourse studies. Many discourse/conversation analysts have examined diverse aspects of the interaction between discourse/conversation and grammar through an analysis of naturally occurring discourse data (Chafe 1994, Ford 1993, Ford and Thompson 1996, Ono and Thompson 1995, 1996, Ochs, Schegloff, and Thompson 1996, and Weber 1993, among others). Research on the so-called discourse markers is one such effort that investigates the interaction between grammar and discourse/conversation (Goldberg 1980, Schourup 1985, Schiffrin 1987, Sorjonen 2001, cf. many papers on discourse markers in Jucker and Ziv 1998).

In the study of English grammar, many traditional grammarians and formal linguists have paid little attention to certain types of words such as particles, connectives, adverbs, and lexicalized phrases. However, as functional linguists have developed discourse-based models of language and become interested in functions of languages in discourse analysis and conversation analysis, many researchers have come to pay attention to the so-called discourse markers and tried to characterize them in their contexts (Carlson 1984, Jucker and Ziv 1998, Schourup 1985, Schiffrin 1987, Schegloff 1982, Mulac and Thompson 1992). The research on discourse markers has shown that many connectives, particles, adverbs, and lexicalized phrases perform diverse functions in cognitive, social, expressive, and textual domains (Schiffrin 1987). Functions of discourse markers are defined by their roles in discourse, and they are explored in terms of the forms and contents of both prior and upcoming discourse. So far, a number of studies have shown that some discourse markers function as reactive tokens, some pertain to the distribution and management of information, and some to the organization of participation and involvement. Research on discourse markers has also shown that discourse markers are closely related to discourse structure and use, and that they reflect and create the

interpretive and interactive contexts in which discourse is constructed (Schiffrin 1987).

In this line of research, this paper attempts to characterize the adverb or exclamatory expression *really* in terms of discourse and grammar through an investigation of its use in a range of interactional contexts. So far, discourse markers have been studied mainly from the perspective of interactional sociolinguistics. This paper, on the other hand, will investigate functions of *really,* which is used as a free-standing turn-constructional unit (TCU), from the perspective of interaction between conversation and grammar. Such an approach will show an interactive nature of *really* among the diverse usages of that particle. Recent interaction-based studies have shown that the study of linguistic structures could be richly informed by consideration of their placement in the wider context of social interaction.

To achieve this goal, I will examine sequential and interactional contexts of *really,* mainly from the conversation-analytic perspective. In characterizing functions of *really,* I will first examine the distributional properties of *really* through distribution/frequency analysis. Examination of the distributional properties of *really* will show to what extent *really* functions as a modifier, a disjunct, or a free-standing element. After showing distributional properties of *really,* I will focus on the functions of the free-standing *really* in conversation in terms of social actions. This inquiry will show that the free-standing *really* is used as a response token to signal that the prior speaker's turn is new information which is not assimilated into the existing knowledge system of the recipient. In this context, *really* functions as a newsmark that indicates the need for specification or for more information in order for the information to be confirmed. In this respect, the use of the free-standing *really* is accompanied by a specific type of sequence. Finally, this research will suggest that many grammatical constructions should be explored in their interactional contexts for a proper understanding.

2. Previous Treatments of *really* in English Studies

In English, there are certain types of words or phrases such as *oh, uhhuh, well, now, then, you know, I mean,* and *actually.* Also there are many words called conjunctions or connectives such as *so, because, and,*

but and *or*. In recent decades, a great number of discourse analysts, developing functionalist models of language, have begun to pay attention to discourse functions of function words, dealing with them in terms of discourse markers or reactive tokens.

The production and comprehension of discourse is a process that involves a continuous interaction and negotiation between speaker and hearer. The interactive process also involves social, cognitive, and textual abilities of the speaker and hearer (Schiffrin 1987). When discourse analysis is carried out in terms of an interactive process, function words cannot be treated as merely trivial elements, but as functionally dynamic elements in the flow of information. The research on discourse markers has shown that many function words are closely related to discourse structure and use, reflecting interactional aspects of the contexts in which the discourse is constructed. Schiffrin (1987) claims that discourse markers such as *I mean, y'know,* and *now* are important means of displaying a speaker's attitude and subjective orientation toward what is being said and to whom (cf. Östman 1981, Schourup 1985).

Before or around the time of the publication of Schiffrin's *Discourse Markers* (1987), there were many studies that dealt with the so-called discourse markers, reactive tokens, or backchannels in discourse (Carlson 1984, Clancy et al. 1996, Schourup 1985, among others). However, curiously enough, little attention has been paid to *really* in discourse, particularly the free-standing particle *really*. Even today, only a few grammar books and dictionaries describe interactional meanings of *really*. That is, Quirk et al. (1985), Biber et al. (1999), and some English dictionaries such as *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* (1998), *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995), and *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary* (1987) provide brief statements on the use of *really*. Previous studies and dictionaries treated *really* either as an adverb or an exclamation, stating that *really* is used either as an emphasizer or an exclamatory marker expressing the respondent's attitude or stance toward the immediately preceding turn.

First, Quirk et al. (1985) discuss the adverb *really* in three categories: (i) an intensifier, (ii) a disjunct, and (iii) a subjunct. That is, as an adverb, *really* usually modifies an adjective or a verb which follows it, functioning as an intensifier or an emphasizer. When *really* is used as a disjunct, it is used to express the speaker's comment on the content of what (s)he is saying. In addition, *really* can function as a subjunct which is concerned

with expressing the semantic role of modality.

Second, many English dictionaries, mentioned above, provide similar explanations about the usage of *really*. They state that *really* has meanings such as *in fact, actually, very,* and *thoroughly,* treating it as an adverb or an exclamation. In addition, these dictionaries provide some made-up examples in which *really* is used as a response, as shown in (1).

(1) a. A: I collect rare coins.
B: Really? ←
b. A: Nobody was allowed inside the Plaza unless he'd been injected by Doc Murray.
B: Really? ←
c. A: We're going to Japan next month.
B: Oh, really? ←

As illustrated in (1), *really* is used as a 'content disjunct' or a response to the immediately preceding turn in interactional contexts. In this context, *really* expresses the speaker's attitude toward the content of the preceding statement. More specifically, most dictionaries state that when *really* is used as a response, it is used to show interest, doubt, or slight displeasure, to express surprise or disbelief at what someone has said, or to check that you have understood them properly. This explanation is not adequate because the particle *really* cannot be properly explained when deprived of its context. In this regard, there is a need to characterize properties of *really* in its sequential and interactional contexts.

Third, some recent interaction-based studies have explored reactive tokens in terms of the sequential organization of talk. In recent years, much interest has grown in exploring the relationship between conversation, social interaction, and grammar in interactional linguistics. Among many studies, there has been some interaction-based research on discourse markers and reactive tokens (Clancy et al. 1996, Clift 2001, Sorjonen 1996, 2001). Clancy et al. (1996) discuss interactional properties of reactive tokens, and Sorjonen (1996) shows properties of Finnish response particles by examining them in terms of sequence organization of talk. Clift investigates the English particle *actually* as a way of exploring the relationship between meaning and interaction. Her research has shown that *actually* can be best characterized by considering it in its sequential and interactional contexts.

As has been discussed, many traditional and recent studies have shown diverse aspects of function words, discourse markers, or reactive tokens. Particularly, interaction-based research has shown that many discourse markers or reactive tokens can be fruitfully explained when they are viewed from the perspective of the interaction between speaker and hearer. This research will explore properties of *really* in their sequential and interactional context from a conversation-analytic perspective.

3. Database and Methodology

The conversational data that are used in this research come from the Santa Barbara Corpus (SBC) of Spoken American English. The conversations in the database were collected and transcribed by the Discourse Group in the Department of Linguistics, University of California, Santa Barbara. Each conversation is transcribed by the transcription convention proposed by Du Bois et al. (1993).[1] The database consists of fourteen dyadic and multi-party conversations, each lasting approximately 20 to 30 minutes. In this system, each line ends with a punctuation mark that indicates the shape of the intonation contour. That is, a comma is used to indicate a continuing contour, a period a final contour, and a question mark an appeal contour, as shown in Excerpt (2).

1) The following are transcription conventions used in the Santa Barbara spoken English corpus (Du Bois et al. 1993):

Intonation unit	{carriage return}	Pause	
truncated IU	--	Long	...(N)
truncated word	-	Medium	...
Speech overlap	[ ]	short	..
Transition continuity		Latching	(0)
Final	.	Quality	
Continuing	,	Quality	<Y Y>
Appeal	?	Quotation	<Q Q>
Transcriber's perspective		Laugh	@@
Researcher's comment	(( ))	Vocal noises	
Uncertain hearing	<X X>	Vocal noises	( )
Indecipherable syllable	X	Inhalation	(H)
Lengthening	=	Exhalation	(Hx)

(2) Alice: (35 intonation units omitted)
... So=,
... I was in the bathtub when he called,
... and I talked to him for a while and,
... he went and,
... he was really down about what ... what ←
I told .. h=im that ˜Tim had said to me,
... and how I was ... so upset?
... He goes <Q why didn't you tell him to go and wake me up Q>.
... <@ I said I di=d @>,
and he wouldn't do it.
Mary: ... Really=? ←
Alice: Mhm.
(6 intonation units omitted)

As shown in (2), the transcription convention in the present data takes an intonation unit (IU) as a basic unit of spoken language, each line representing one intonation unit.

In characterizing properties of *really* in conversation, I will use both qualitative and quantitative methods. That is, first I will examine distributional properties of *really* by using frequency/distribution analysis in its sequential contexts. Excerpt (2) illustrates two instances of *really* in their interactional contexts, showing different functions or properties. This research will first examine all the instances of *really* through frequency analysis in its contexts, characterizing the distributional properties of *really*. In addition, it will show to what extent *really* is used as a 'content disjunct', i.e., as an independent turn in conversation.

After showing the distributional properties of *really*, I will examine functions of the free-standing particle *really* in conversation, paying attention to the exact placement of *really* in its sequential contexts. A careful examination of the placement of *really* in contexts will show that the free-standing *really* is used as a 'newsmark', performing diverse social actions in its sequential context. This research will eventually suggest that the interaction among participants shapes the form of grammar, as reflected in the use of the free-standing particle *really*.

4. Distributional Properties of *Really* in Conversation

As a way of characterizing *really* in conversation, first I explored distributional properties of *really* in its sequential and interactional contexts. First, I checked the frequency of *really* in the database by using a concordance program.[2] The total number of instances of *really* amounts to 224 cases. The frequency of *really* ranges from 1 to 40 in each conversation of the database. Based on this frequency in the present data, this research will explore distributional properties of *really* in the following points: (i) the distribution of *really* in terms of grammatical functions, i.e., an emphasizer, a disjunct, or a free-standing element, and (ii) the distribution of modified elements, i.e., adjectives, verbs, and others.

First, let us consider grammatical functions of *really* in terms of an emphasizer, a disjunct, or a subjunct, as has been discussed in Quirk et al. (1985). Quirk et al. (1985) discuss the adverb *really* in the following three categories: (i) an intensifier, (ii) a disjunct, and (iii) a subjunct.

(3) a. She has a really beautiful face.
b. Really, the public does not have much choice in the matter.
c. A: I'm going to resign.
B: Really? ['Is that so?']

(Quirk et al. 1985: 447, 622)

In (3a), *really* modifies the following adjective *beautiful*, functioning as an intensifier or an emphasizer, which adds to the force of the adjective. In (3b), on the other hand, *really* functions as one of content disjuncts, which is used to express the speaker's comment on the content of what he is saying, or to express the sense in which the speaker judges what he says to be true or false.[3] In addition, in (3c), *really* functions as a content disjunct, being used as a response to the immediately preceding turn.

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2) The concordance program that is used in this research is MonoConc Pro 2.0, which has been developed by Michael Barlow (2001).

3) Quirk et al. (1985:620-1) divide content disjuncts into two: Type (a): Degree of truth, and Type (b): Value judgment. In Type (a), there are three main groups: Group (i) express conviction, Group (ii) express some degree of doubt, and Group (iii) state the sense in which the speaker judges what he says to be true or false. They state that *really* belongs to Group (iii) of Type (a), and that there is often a reference to the 'reality' or lack of 'reality' in what is said.

First of all, examination of the present data shows that *really* is used either as an adverb that modifies adjectives, verbs, or adverbs, or it can stand alone, forming a single, independent turn, as shown in (4).

(4) a. Miles: I really=, ← A
was wondering what that guy was thinking.
He must have been --
j- since he didn't know her,
.. <HI that must have been [quite a shock] HI>.
Jamie: [That was really] wei=rd. ← B
.. That sounds [2really weird2].
b. Wendy: ... You're so strange,
honey,
it m_ really makes me wonder. ← C
KEN: .. @[@@][2@@@@2]
Marci: [@]
Kendra: [<@ Oh really], ← D
[2really. ← E
Are you su=re you wanna2] go over there for four years?

As illustrated in (4), two instances of *really* in the IUs marked as A and C are used to modify verbs, and *really* in B to modify an adjective. However, *really* marked as D and E do not modify any preceding or following elements, but they stand alone, thus such cases are treated as free-standing particles.

Examination of the present data shows the following distribution of the usage of *really*.

Table 1. The distribution of *really*.

really as a modifier	**159** (71.0%)
really + adjective	93 (41.5%)
really + verb	60 (26.8%)
really + adverb	6 (2.7%)
really as a free-standing TCU	**45** (20.1%)
Other cases (truncated IUs etc.)	**20** (8.9%)
Total	224 (100%)

As shown in Table 1, *really* is used as an adverb that modifies adjectives,

verbs, or adverbs, with the frequency rate of 159 (i.e., 71.0%) out of the total of 224 cases. More specifically, *really* is used to modify adjectives, verbs, or adverbs which follow it, with the frequency rates of 41.5% (i.e., 93 cases), 26.8% (60 cases), and 2.7% (6 cases) out of the total of 224 cases, respectively. This fact suggests that the major function of *really* is to modify adjectives, verbs, adverbs, or other elements at the local level.

However, although the rate is not high, some instances of *really* function as a free-standing *really*, serving as a discourse marker or a reactive token. That is, 45 (i.e., 20.1%) out of the total of 224 are instances of the free-standing *really*, which usually occur as single, independent turns. The remaining 20 cases (i.e., 8.9%) are either used to modify some other elements, or found in truncated IUs, which cannot be explained properly.

Finally, another thing that needs to be discussed is the use of *real* as an adverb. As has been noted in Biber et al. (1999) and some English dictionaries, in conversational American English, speakers often use *real* as an adverb, which is shown in (5).

(5) Doris: ... Uh,
... day before yesterday,
it was the most weird day I've ever seen
in my entire adult l=ife.
... It was um,
... the wind was blowing real hot when I first got up. ←
... And it was early.
.. Real early, ←
like seven o'clock in the morning,
(18 intonation units omitted here)
(H) then it was real hazy, ←
and there was just dust particles,
all over.

As illustrated in (5), the adjectival form *real* is used to modify adjectives which follow it, functioning as an adverb. Examination of the present data shows that 31 (i.e, 68.9%) out of the total of 45 instances of *real* in the present data are used to modify adjectives which follow it, behaving as an adverb. The other 14 cases (i.e., 31.1%) are used as a modifier of nouns which follow it, functioning as an adjective. This fact suggests that in conversational American English, *real* is sometimes used as an adverb to

modify adjectives which follow it with a relatively high frequency.

5. Functions of the Free-standing Particle *Really* in Talk-in-interaction

5.1. Preliminary Remarks on the Interactional Functions of *Really*

As has been discussed in Section 2, some traditional grammarians and English dictionaries have shown that *really* is used as an adverb, an exclamation, or an emphasizer, displaying a number of meanings and functions of *really* in discourse (Quirk et al. 1985, Biber et al. 1999, and a number of English dictionaries cited above, among others). However, in recent years, interaction-based research has provided a new way of characterizing discourse markers or reactive tokens (Heritage 1984, 1998, and Clift 2001). That is, Heritage has shown that the particle *oh* is used to display to a prior speaker that the use of *oh* is a token that signals a change in the recipient's state of knowledge. Clift (2001:286) claims that "the placement of *actually* in the turn and its component TCUs is highly consequential for the activities being undertaken in the sequence to which its turn belongs". She shows that the particle *actually* can be characterized in terms of informing, self-repair, and topic movement, when considered in terms of the sequential organization of talk. In this respect, this research will attempt to explore interactional functions of the free-standing particle *really* by considering its sequential placement in conversation.

As has been discussed, examination shows that the number of tokens of the free-standing *really* amounts to 45. Among these, two occur in the expression 'not really' and another one in 'is it really?'. 'not really' is often used to say 'no' or 'not' in a less strong manner as can be seen in the following excerpt:

(6) Nathan: (8 IUs omitted)
... Are you tired?
Kathy: ... <P N=ot really. ←
... I mean kind of but,

In (6), *really* as a free-standing particle sometimes occurs with 'not',

forming the fixed expression 'not really'. In this case, 'not really' expresses negation in a mild manner, without being very definite.

Another distributional property of the free-standing particle *really* is that 22 instances are accompanied by a level intonation contour. Among these, 4 cases are preceded with *oh*, 6 cases with *yeah*, and one with *now*. Examination also shows that 20 instances of *really* are accompanied by rising intonation, functioning as a type of 'declarative question'. Among these, 10 instances cooccur with *oh*, forming the expression 'oh really?' The other 9 cases occur as a single expression 'really?', and the other one is preceded by *mhm*. Bearing this distributional property in mind, let us discuss interactional functions of the free-standing particle *really* in more detail.

5.2. *Really* as a Response Token to Newly Perceived Information

Conversation involves diverse processes in which information is exchanged among participants. The state of information delivered from the current speaker to the next speaker is new, given, or assumed. Depending on the state of the information, there are diverse strategies which speakers take in the process of communication. In this respect, the free-standing particle *really* can be examined in terms of the negotiation of the state of speakers' locally available knowledge or information (cf. Heritage 1984).

Examination of the placement of the free-standing *really* in a range of conversational sequences shows that the particle is used to propose that the recipient has not assimilated into his/her knowledge system the information provided by the prior speaker. This property is in contrast to the property of *oh* which is used to display that the recipient has accepted the newly provided information, and that "(s)he has undergone some kind of change in his or her locally current state of knowledge, information, orientation or awareness" (Heritage 1984). Let us consider an excerpt that illustrates the contrast between *oh* and *really*.[4]

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4) Heritage (1984:302) provides an excerpt that clearly shows the contrast between *oh* and *really* used as response tokens to the information provided in the immediately preceding turn.

(i) [JG:3C:5 simplified]
R: I ferget t'tell y'the two best things that happen' tuh me t'day.
....
R: I gotta B plus on my math test,

(7) Rebecca: ... You guys newly married?
Rickie: ... Well [just a year].
Arnold: [A yea=r ..] two days ago.
Rickie: @@[@@ (H)]=
Rebecca: [Oh great]. ← A
Arnold: .. @@
Rebecca: ... Soon you'll be in my condition.
Rickie: @@[@@]
Rebecca: [which is p]regnant.
Rickie: [2Aw really]? ← B
Arnold: [2(Hx) @A=w2], ← C
Rebecca: [2@@@@2]
Rickie: Con2][3grat3]ulations.
Rebecca: [3Yeah3].
Rickie: @@ [4(H)4]@

As shown in (7), *oh* and *really* are used as reactive tokens to the new information provided by the prior speaker. Rebecca learns that Rickie and Arnold got married about a year ago by asking them explicitly when they got married. Then, she responds with *oh*, suggesting that *oh* is used to mark the receipt of the information delivered in the preceding turn(s). Likewise, in C, Arnold responds with *aw*, which also functions as a receipt of new information about Rebecca's pregnancy. As Heritage points out, *oh* is often combined with an assessment component, shown in A. *really* is also used as a response token to new information, as shown in B. However, the use of *really* is different from that of *oh* in expressing the stance or attitude of a recipient. That is, *really* is used to mark the receipt of the information delivered in the preceding turn with an attitude of unex-

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C: On yer final?
R: Uh huh?
C: Oh that's wonderful
R: And I got athletic award.
C: REALLY?
R: Uh huh. =From sports club.
C: Oh that's terrific Roger

According to Heritage (1984:302), *oh*, which occurs in the turn-initial position, contains additional components that achieve other tasks made relevant by the sequence in progress. That is, *oh* is often combined with assessment components, resulting in an *oh*-plus-assessment turn structure.

pectedness, interest, incredulity, surprise, disbelief, and so on.

In communicating with each other in conversation, speakers exchange information that is given or new, and thus, as Heritage claims, "they may have a variety of resources with which they can infer whether a candidate recipient is informed or uninformed about a potential 'tellable'". In such a context, recipients respond to the informed/uninformed status of knowledge/information provided by the prior speaker. The status of information is the object of active negotiation throughout the course of exchanging information among interactants. In this context, response tokens are used to signal a change or lack of change of information state in response to prior turns at talk that are produced as informings. Thus, recipients, by using a variety of reactive tokens, can confirm or reject the knowledge/information transmitted from the prior informed speaker. *Really* is thus a means by which recipients can express the status of knowledge in their mental system. Depending on the knowledge status, speakers are actively engaged in the process of negotiation by adding specific types of turn components such as requests for further information.

In discourse studies, there has been a distinction between what the speaker already knows from the past experience or inference based on world knowledge, and information that the speaker has just perceived. Such a distinction has been made by using terms such as prepared vs. unprepared mind, old vs. new knowledge, state of knowledge vs. newly obtained knowledge. This fact suggests that there is a need to make a distinction between knowledge that is already assimilated and known to the recipient and knowledge/information that is new, unperceived, and unassimilated into the existing knowledge system. In this respect, the main claim of this research is that one of the major functions of *really* is to signal that the information provided by the prior speaker is new and unassimilated into the knowledge system of the recipient. In the process of transmitting information from an informed party to an uninformed party, there is a negotiation between the interactants. Such a process of negotiation about the state of knowledge can be observed in moment-by-moment actions of speakers. Based on this observation, let us discuss the functions of *really* in more detail.

5.3. Interactional Functions of the Free-standing Particle *Really*

Section 5.2 has shown that *really* is used as a response marker for the

new information provided by the current speaker. Based on this observation, let us discuss interactional functions of the free-standing particle *really* in more detail.

First of all, the occurrence of *really* as a response token in the next speaker's turn indicates that the immediately prior turn is treated as news for the recipient. Jefferson (1981:62-6) calls "newsmarks" reactive tokens such as 'did you?' 'yer kidding', 'really', etc. that treat a prior utterance as news for the recipient. According to her, these reactive tokens are used to treat specifically a prior speaker's turn as news for the recipient rather than merely informative. Bearing this in mind, let us consider the following excerpt in (8).

(8) Miles: .. @
... I didn't know this,
but apparently in .. Brazil,
they have a very very high AI=DS infection rate.
Harold: Really? ←
Jamie: Oh.
Pete: Oh.
Jamie: probably [X].
Miles: [It's] [2supposed2] to be .. ve=ry high.
Pete: [2Mm2].

As shown in (8), the information provided by Miles is treated as new information. In this context, Harold, the next speaker, treats it as news which requests more specific, detailed information. On the other hand, the other speakers, Jamie and Pete, use the reactive token *oh*, indicating that the information provided by the prior speaker is received. Heritage (1984:340) notes, "any newsmark may be prefixed by *oh* and, in many cases, the presence or absence of such a prefix plays a role in projecting different trajectories."[5]

In a similar way, the following excerpt shows that the information provided in the preceding turn is treated as new information.

5) As has been shown, in the present data, 14 out of the total of 45 instances are preceded by *oh*, forming the fixed expression 'oh really'.

(9) Harold: when I was there [2<X the other day X>2].
Miles: [2well,
my lambada's2] [3definitely3] getting better.
Jamie: [3Really3]? ←
... Really? ←
I wanna go out lambada dancing with you.
... [XX] --
Miles: [I mean] I'm gonna start dancing with
those Brazilian women.
... So I can learn how to beat my hips,
(following intonation units deleted)

In (9), Miles talks about his progress in lambada dancing. The information about the lambada experience is responded to by Jamie's production of the reactive token *really*, and the utterance is repeated because the first one is overlapped. This shows that Miles's prior utterance is new information. In this context, *really* functions as a response token for the newly provided information, which has not been assimilated into his existing knowledge system.

The next thing that should be discussed is the sequential organization of talk when the free-standing *really* is used. Jefferson (1981) notes that when "oh really?" is used as a free-standing element, it regularly forms a sequence that runs as follows: (i) news announcement, (ii) "oh really?", (iii) reconfirmation, and (iv) assessment (which is generally terminal or topic-curtailing).[6] A more detailed examination shows that there are certain varieties of sequences of the free-standing *really*. Let us consider the following excerpt in (10).

6) Jefferson (1981) illustrates an excerpt as in the following:

(i) [NB: IV:7:5-6]
M: How many cigarettes yih had.
(0.8)
E: NO:NE. ← (i)
M: Oh really? ← (ii)
E: No. ← (iii)
M: Very good. ← (iv)

(10) Pete: That's true.
... That's definitely been the case in Indonesia,
for quite a few years.
Mariylin: Mhm.
.. [Really]? ← A
Roy: [Really]. ← B
Pete: .. Yeah.
... Well like,
when I was= .. living there for the couple of years,
.. it was --
... the rainy season was all off,
.. you know,
it rained during the dry season,
and was= .. dry during the rainy [season],
Marilyn: [Oh really]? ← C
Pete: and stuff like that,
yeah.
Marilyn: ... Gee.
Pete: And really really dry.
They were having a drought <X while I was there X>.

In (10), we see a few instances of the free-standing particle *really*. First, when we examine the instance of *oh really?* marked as C, we can notice that the information about his experience in Indonesia provided by Pete is new to Marilyn, and thus *oh really* functions as a newsmark. Then, Pete, after producing his ongoing talk in an intonation unit, produces a confirmation. Then, Marilyn responds to Pete with an assessment marker. After that, Pete continues his talk, providing additional information. In the cases of A and B, on the other hand, the sequences are somewhat different. That is, in this case, *really* is followed by a confirmation marker, but the confirmation is not followed by an assessment component in the next turn. Rather, Pete provides additional information as a way of justifying his prior statement, realizing that the information that he provided has not been assimilated into the knowledge system of the recipient. This fact suggests that another possible sequence of *(oh) really* goes as follows: (i) news announcement, (ii) "(oh) really?", (iii) reconfirmation, and (iv) justification or additional information.

The sequence that involves the component of justification or additional

information is closely related to the action of repair (Schegloff et al. 1977). That is, the use of *really* signals that there is a problem in hearing or understanding the prior talk. In this context, the use of the free-standing *really* triggers the prior speaker's repair activity of providing additional information, as shown in (11).

(11) Lynne: because,
%_you know,
.. I mean,
<HI you can make HI> a horse go lame,
(H) By doing [it-].
Lenore: [really]. ←
Lynne: Well you can trim em too short.
... % (H) And make em,
you know,
and they're just .. a little bit,
for f- --
the first couple of days,
you know,

In (11), Lynne, the daughter, talks about her experiences in learning how to care for horses' feet. In the excerpt, what Lynne is talking about is new information to Lenore, her mother. In this context, Lenore's use of *really* functions as a repair initiator that requests more information. In such a context, Lynne, after producing *well*, a hesitation marker, instead of a confirmation marker, provides additional information to her previous statement. This excerpt shows that another sequence of *(oh) really* which triggers repair goes as follows: (i) news announcement (repairable), (ii) "(oh) really?" (repair initiation), and (iii) justification or additional information (repair).

Finally, there could be another possible sequence where the next speaker produces additional elements to the free-standing *really*. In such a context, the prior speaker may not provide additional information, but continues his/her talk, or changes the ongoing topic.

(12) Marilyn: ... actually,
you know,
I'd love to do gray water,
Pete: ... [Mhm].
Marilyn: [here],
.. but,
Roy: ... It's [illegal].
Marilyn: [it's illegal].
Pete: .. Really. ←
.. How rude.
Marilyn: ... Isn't that [retarded]?
Roy: [Isn't that weird]?
Pete: (THROAT)
... It is.
... They just built a .. a great big gray water processing center,
.. at the laundromat,

In (12), when Pete produces the free-standing *really*, he does not wait for a confirmation, but adds his own assessment.[7] In such a context, the sequence of *really* is curtailed, and then the prior speaker, Marilyn, moves to another topic.

So far, we have seen interactional sequences in which *really* is used on the assumption that interactional properties of *really* can be richly informed by considering its placement in the wider context of social interaction. Examination has shown that the typical conversational sequence of *really* goes as follows: (i) news announcement, (ii) *(oh) really?*, (iii) reconfirmation, and (iv) assessment, justification, or additional information. It also has shown that another sequence of *(oh) really* which triggers repair can be summarized as follows: (i) news announcement (repairable), (ii) "(oh) really?" (repair initiation), and (iii) justification or additional information (repair). Furthermore, it has also shown that in some contexts, the prior speaker continues his/her talk, or changes the ongoing topic instead of providing additional information.

7) It also should be noted that *really* is not accompanied by rising intonation. As has been discussed, about half of the total tokens in the present data are marked with level intonation.

6. Summary and Conclusions

So far, this research has explored properties of *really,* particularly the free-standing particle *really,* in its sequential and interactional contexts, mainly from a conversation-analytic perspective. In recent years, there has been a great deal of research on discourse markers and reactive tokens by considering them in their discourse contexts. In this line of research, this study has attempted to characterize properties of *really* in English conversation.

In traditional grammar, *really* is treated as an adverb or an exclamation. Quirk et al. (1985) state that *really* is used as an emphasizer, a content disjunct, and a subjunct. Many English dictionaries have shown that *really* has meanings such as *in fact, actually, very,* and *thoroughly,* treating it as an adverb or an exclamation. In addition, they illustrate that the free-standing *really* is used to show interest, doubt, surprise, disbelief, or slight displeasure at what has been said in the previous turn. However, recent studies have shown that interaction-based research can provide a better understanding of reactive tokens or discourse markers. In this respect, this research has tried to characterize the free-standing particle *really* in terms of discourse and grammar through an investigation of its use in a range of interactional contexts.

Examination of the distributional properties of *really* shows that *really* is used dominantly as an adverb that modifies adjectives, verbs, or adverbs, with the frequency rate of 71.0% out of the total of 224 cases. Particularly, *really* is frequently used to modify adjectives that follow it, with the rate of 41.5%. 45 (i.e., 20.1%) cases of *really* are used as instances of the free-standing *really,* which usually occurs as single, independent turns. This fact suggests that the major function of *really* is to modify adjectives, verbs, adverbs, or other elements at a local level. In addition, some instances of *really* function as the free-standing *really,* serving as a discourse marker or a reactive token.

The next thing that has been discussed is the interactional functions of the free-standing *really.* Examination of *really* in its conversational sequences shows that *really* is used to propose that the recipient has not assimilated into his/her knowledge system the information provided by the prior speaker. This research has shown that *really* functions as a newsmark that indicates the need for specification or for more information in order for the information to be confirmed. Thus, the use of the free-standing *really* is accompanied by specific types of sequences. In such a context, the typical

conversational sequence that the free-standing *really* constitutes can be summarized as follows: (i) news announcement, (ii) *(oh) really?*, (iii) reconfirmation, and (iv) assessment, justification, or additional information. This exploration shows that consideration of the sequential organization of talk is important in characterizing discourse markers or reactive tokens. In this regard, this research has shown that grammatical constructions such as discourse markers cannot be explained properly at the sentence level, but that they should be explored in their interactional contexts.

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